



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2018 Dodge County Crash Fatalities Lowest In At Least 17 Years, Still Work to Be Done

Sheriff Dale Schmidt wishes to thank the men and women of the Dodge County Sheriff's Office for their hard work throughout 2018 toward reducing the harm caused by vehicle crashes. Their efforts, along with the voluntary compliance of many in the public, have resulted in the lowest number of fatalities from crashes (8), dating back at least 17 years.

In November 2017, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office initiated a long-term traffic crash reduction strategy in response to a disturbing increase in fatal crashes. 2017 ended as one of the deadliest years on Dodge County roads in recent history with 20 people dying in crashes; 15 in the second half of the year. Faced with the challenge of trying to impact crash totals in a 900 square mile county with limited resources, the Sheriff's Office took an evidence based/data driven approach, which included reviewing the most current research in this area, identification of high crash areas, targeted enforcement, public education, and high visibility signage. This was done in an effort to reduce the incredible harm caused by automobile crashes on the individuals involved and their loved ones, society as a whole, as well as the often long lasting impact these crashes have on emergency personnel who respond to and investigate these tragedies. We set a challenging goal of a 25% - 50% reduction in fatal crashes in 2018 compared to the 2017 total.

The results of these efforts were a 60% reduction in fatalities over 2017. Checking internal records dating back to 2003, as well as online records dating back to 2001, this is the lowest annual fatality total recorded in either data base. Crash totals fluctuate year to year based on many factors, many of which are outside the control of law enforcement. In a year when all neighboring counties to Dodge observed at best, a consistent number of fatalities from 2017 to 2018 (Jefferson) or significant increases (Columbia, Fond du Lac, Washington, and Winnebago), the Sheriff's Office is pleased to see such a significant reduction to record low levels.

The Dodge County Sheriff's Office feels it has found a successful strategy to help address the challenges it faces regarding traffic safety. Sheriff Dale Schmidt says, "The men and women of this agency and others who contributed to this effort should be proud of the positive impact they have had on reducing crash fatalities. No one person is responsible for these results, it was truly a collaborative effort." The Dodge County Sheriff's Office will continue to use research and data, as well as ongoing internal problem solving efforts to strive for continued improvement in traffic safety efforts, as it does in all areas of our operations. We will continue to strive to effectively use the resources given to us to make Dodge County a safe place to live, work, and visit. However, it is imperative that we have the continued assistance of the public through the following efforts:



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- **Slow down** – speed significantly increases the chances of fatal outcomes. Often a few inches can mean the difference between a near miss and a serious crash
- **Don't drive impaired by anything** – Drugs, alcohol, and even legal prescriptions can lead to a deadly outcomes
- **Always make complete stops and make sure you are clear to proceed before doing so** – many of our fatal crashes are due to not making complete stops and failing to yield the right of way
- **Do not allow yourself to be distracted while driving** – a fraction of a second focusing on anything other than what is going on around you could result in a tragedy
- **Wear your seat belt** – this lifesaving device is meant to keep you in your seat and significantly reduces injuries in crashes. Also, remember that your airbags are meant to compliment seat belt use, not replace it. By not wearing a seat belt, your airbag will not be as effective in saving your life.

Questions may be directed to Sheriff Dale J Schmidt.

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